

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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LIVING CONDITIONS IN GORODOMLYA -OSTASHKOVSoviet Attitudes toward Living Conditions

1. There was a very pronounced improvement in living conditions in the Soviet Union after the introduction of the 1947 currency reform. This was apparent not only in such concrete manifestations as lower prices and greater availability of consumer goods, but also in the clothing and general physical appearance of Soviet employees at Institute 88 and Branch No. 1.
- 25X1 2. [] the average Soviet citizen was satisfied with living conditions in the USSR as they stood in 1952. To be sure, many Soviet workers and employees complained about the fact that some goods were not available or that prices were too high for their modest incomes. However, they were undoubtedly satisfied in a general sense as a result of the great increase in their standard of living achieved after 1947. Furthermore, the average Soviet was easily satisfied. A large percentage of the Soviet urban population was not particularly ambitious and was not covetous of the better material well-being of others. The average worker seemed content to do the work which was expected of him and nothing more: to continue living on the same economic plane.
- 25X1 3. The prices of basic food products have probably been sufficiently reduced by the series of price cuts introduced after 1947 to satisfy the average Soviet worker. On the other hand [] food prices were still higher than before the war. The Soviets also complained that shoes, clothing, bicycles, furniture, and other hard consumer goods were too expensive, and expressed their hope for improvement in this direction. []
[]
4. Quite a few of the Soviet employees at the Podlipki Institute and on Gorodomlya Island had been in Germany after WWII. As was the case with other sensitive topics, they were reserved in talking about their impressions of Germany. They evidently had been favorably influenced by their experiences in Germany, as they remarked about the fine furniture, clothing, housing, and many automobiles which they observed there, but they said little more.
- 25X1 5. [] Soviet citizens [] might have viewed Germany as paradise in a material sense, but that the USSR was still their homeland. The extremely strong national pride as expressed by the Soviets [] probably diminished the effect of impressions gained abroad. Furthermore, living conditions had improved so much in the Soviet Union in the last few years that East Germany no longer appeared so prosperous by comparison.

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Consumer Goods

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It was quite apparent that the last two price reduction laws (1951 and 1952) had less effect than the previous three in lowering the prices of consumer goods. Not only were the reductions smaller, but the prices of a few goods, in particular butter, increased after the introduction of the last two price cuts. the Soviet population were undoubtedly disappointed as the German specialists

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7. Certain goods were always in short supply, even after the currency reform. These included flour, rolls, fish, sausage, vegetables, fruit, pepper, cinnamon, underwear, and electric light bulbs. Furthermore, many food products were always delivered to Gorodomlya and Ostashkov stores on an erratic basis. For example, there would be only one type of sausage available for a period of two months. Then, during the next three months, we could only buy another variety. The procurement system evidently functioned very poorly.

8. Other products were in short supply during the years 1950 to 1952 which had been available in relatively abundant quantities in 1948 and 1949. These included butter, sausage, noodles, macaroni, rice, and grits. Sugar in particular was less available after October 1950 than in the preceding two or three years. Furthermore, certain bakery products such as white bread and rolls were especially hard to get in Ostashkov. There were always long lines standing in front of the bakeries there. Black bread remained available as before but it was frequently sour and had a very high water content.

9. On the other hand, certain products were more available in recent years in the Gorodomlya-Ostashkov region than was previously the case. These included canned vegetables, preserves, condensed milk, cocoa, coffee, bicycles, cameras, and better-quality shoes. A few imported products were available in the state stores there, including Czechoslovakian shoes (Bata), women's stockings from Germany, Danish butter, German bicycles (Diamant Plant), Czechoslovakian cloth, and German Agfa film.

10. prices and comments on availability of a few articles sold in Gorodomlya and Ostashkov state stores and free markets in 1952.

<u>Article</u>	<u>State Price (in rubles)</u>	<u>Free Market Price (in rubles)</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1 kilogram beef	10.00-15.00	25.00-30.00	Seldom available in state stores.
1 kilogram pork	18.00-25.00	25.00-45.00	Seldom available in state stores.

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<u>Article</u>	<u>State Price (in rubles)</u>	<u>Free Market Price (in rubles)</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1 kilogram butter	36.00-42.00	50.00-60.00	Butter sold in free market was not as good in quality as that sold in state stores.
1 kilogram potatoes	0.80- 0.95	1.50- 3.00	Poor quality sold in state stores. Free market price was 1.50-3.00 rubles during harvest time. Prices rose to 5.00-8.00 rubles in winter.
1 kilogram flour	6.00- 8.00	20.00-25.00	Available only four to five times a year in state stores. Sold in black market for 20 to 25 rubles.
1 kilogram apples	10.00-12.00	16.00-20.00	Seldom available in state stores.
1 egg	1.00	1.50- 2.80	Seldom available in state stores. Price in free market varied according to season.
1 chicken		15.00-25.00	
1 lemon	4.00- 5.00	4.00- 5.00	Only available one or two times a year.
1 meter suit material	80.00-550.00		550 rubles--very good quality.
1 meter silk (crepe de Chine)	200.00-220.00		
1 pair shoes	60.00-400.00		
1 kilogram knitting wool		200.00-250.00	Never available in state stores

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<u>Article</u>	<u>State Price (in rubles)</u>	<u>Free Market Price (in rubles)</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1 raincoat	200.00		
1 razor blade	0.40		
1 bicycle	800.00-900.00		

Housing

11. All German specialists [redacted] were housed in two-story apartment buildings located on the island. [redacted] One square meter of that was taken up by the heating stove. [redacted]

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[redacted] Some apartment buildings on Gorodomlya Island were in better condition, in particular the new brick buildings which had been constructed for the Soviet technical intelligentsia. These buildings were all provided with steam heating.

14. [redacted] monthly rent of 21.50 rubles for our 16-square-meter room. In addition [redacted] electricity ranging from about 20 rubles in the summer to 40 rubles in winter. [redacted] the Soviet inhabitants paid the same rent as the German specialists.

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15. The electric power facilities on Gorodomlya Island were entirely inadequate. Some buildings were frequently subject to power black-outs. The current was never regular. [redacted] 180 to 190 volts and on other days 230 to 235 volts. The voltage often increased suddenly to 360 volts and thereby ruined electric light bulbs and radio tubes. Buildings on one end of the island very often received only 170 volts while simultaneously those on the other end received 260 volts. The power station on the island had no automatic regulation of current.

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16. Middle-ranking engineers and technicians had in general the same type of housing as the workers in Podlipki. Only the very top personnel there received better housing. The differences in housing conditions were more pronounced on Gorodomlya Island. All of the Soviet technical intelligentsia of Branch No. 1 lived in new apartment buildings which had been constructed on the island. [redacted] only two workers lived there and they were activists. In general, the workers and lesser employees at Branch No. 1 either lived in Ostashkov or in a small village located on the island itself. This village was nothing more than a collection of primitive shacks.

17. [redacted] in the town of Ostashkov. Most of the buildings there were in a dilapidated condition. The town of Ostashkov was provided with electricity, but only at night. There was a power blackout there during the daytime. [redacted] most parts, if not all of the town, were without any sewage or water facilities. Pumps were located outside of dwellings and excess water was carried away in surface street ditches. [redacted] running water only in the Ostashkov hospital.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Class Distinctions

18. [redacted] a strong awareness of social or class differences among the Soviet population. Engineers and administrators never went to taverns or cafes frequented by workers and vice versa. In fact, poor workers dressed in felt boots and quilted jackets would not even be allowed to enter a fancy cafe in Moscow. The doorman would prevent him from entering. Workers and bosses automatically kept apart when they sat in the same restaurant or gathered on a street corner.
19. It was noteworthy in respect to class distinctions that workers at Branch No. 1 ate in a large hall in the Gorodomlya club while the top administrators and engineers ate by themselves in a small, well-furnished dining-room. The technical intelligentsia sat together apart from the mass of the workers even at May Day and other official celebrations. This was also true at public movies, where the bosses sat in the loge and ordinary workers in the rear of the theater. Concerning the latter example [redacted] It was simply an implicit recognition of the existence of class differences.
20. As far as the workers were concerned, their pointed aloofness from their Soviet bosses probably developed, not as a result of any feeling of class inferiority, but simply because of fear. They knew that their supervisors enjoyed great authority and felt that it was better to have nothing to do with them.
21. And, so, it was generally true that the bosses associated only with bosses and workers with workers. [redacted] class stratification was not as strict as in German society. Furthermore, Party members tended to associate with one another and thus cut across class lines.

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22. It was difficult to determine the attitudes of the working class toward class distinctions and preferential treatment granted to the technical intelligentsia. However, certain conditions caused friction between, and probably tended to isolate, the workers and bosses. As a general principle, Soviet sector chiefs and foremen were always pressing the workers for more work. The workers resented these persistent pressures, as they knew that sector chiefs and others like them were solely concerned with bonuses which they hoped to receive. The method of distributing bonuses was a specific sore point with the workers. They regarded as unfair the fact that they did the work while those on top received bonuses and recognition for this work.

23. Workers frequently had to suffer for the mistakes of their supervisors. In a case [redacted] a worker was ordered by his foreman to operate a pump. The worker refused, explaining that the pump was insufficiently oiled. The foreman told him to do it anyway. The worker obeyed and the pump was damaged. At a subsequent investigation it was determined that the worker was to blame and he had to pay for the repairs.

Anti-Semitism

24. [redacted] most non-Jewish Soviet citizens, in particular Great Russians, were strongly prejudiced against their fellow Soviet citizens of Jewish origin. [redacted]

25. This prejudice probably resulted from the fact that Soviet Jews were more ambitious than the Great Russians as a group. Their ambition and drive enabled them to occupy a large number of top positions in proportion to their numerical standing within the Soviet population. Perhaps 15% of the Soviet technical intelligentsia of Branch No. 1 were Jews. In addition to resenting the overall professional success of Soviet Jews, Russian workers possibly disliked them because, as a group, they were identified as bosses.

26. [redacted] two governmental actions which were presumably directed against Soviet Jews. [redacted]

[redacted] no Soviet Jews were being accepted into the diplomatic service after 1947.

27. At least two Soviet Jews were relieved of important positions at Institute 88 in 1950 or 1951. [redacted] this was the result of a move to reduce the influence of Jews at that institute. One of the individuals affected by this move was General GONOR, who had been director of Institute 88. He reputedly was relieved of his post and transferred to a textile plant in the east. The second individual was Senior Lieutenant UMANSKIY, who was relieved of his post as director of the rocket-testing grounds of Institute 88.

Corruption and Crime

28. [redacted] corruption [redacted] an everyday occurrence among all levels of society in the Soviet Union. [redacted]

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[redacted] most top Soviet engineers and administrators at Branch No. 1 were engaged in shady practices of one kind or another.

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31. The workers and employees of both Branch No. 1 and Institute 88 committed an extraordinary amount of petty thievery. Everything in the two installations which could be moved had to be nailed down. At Podlipki, for example, it was impossible to find a roll of insulating tape in the entire institute. But you could buy all you wanted at a public market 100 meters from the institute, where workers were selling stolen goods.

32. Soviet workers at Branch No. 1 frequently stole and consumed alcohol (97%) which was used for testing rocket engines. On one occasion, two workers bored a hole in an alcohol tank and promptly started to drink large quantities of the stuff. Their greed proved their downfall, however, because they soon dropped senseless to the ground and were found there by a watchdog.

33. The driver of the bus which carried the German specialists to and from work at Institute 88 evidently sold large quantities of gasoline which were entrusted to him. [redacted] one Soviet engineer there [redacted] was continually taking long outings on his motorcycle at a time when gasoline was extremely difficult to obtain. [redacted] he purchased the gasoline from the bus driver. Also, the magazin on Gorodomlya Island was the scene of an extraordinary number of shady deals. Personnel employed in the magazin were continually being arrested for embezzling funds and property.

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34. [redacted] characterize the entire Soviet industrial machinery as one big swindle. The widespread incidence of corruption undoubtedly had a negative effect on the efficiency of the industrial machinery. The people at the top, the plant directors and their assistants,

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were as involved in corruption as anyone else and this fact was known to their subordinates and the mass of the workers. This weakened discipline exercised by the leading administrative and technical personnel, as they always stood in danger of being exposed by an recalcitrant worker who was "in the know".

Miscellaneous Comments

35. [redacted] a small revolution took place in the southern area of the USSR in about 1948 or 1949. [redacted] the Kazakh SSR or some other nearby republic. 25X1
36. [redacted] the interest of the Soviet population in Western radio broadcasts. [redacted] no Soviet citizen who listened to these broadcasts would ever have admitted the fact openly. 25X1
37. Quite a few of the Soviet technical intelligentsia on Gorodomlya Island owned radios. There were perhaps 60 radios in the possession of the Soviet inhabitants of the island. [redacted] listened to broadcasts from the West. Only those who trusted and knew their neighbors could have afforded to do so, due to the very crowded living conditions and thin walls. 25X1
38. [redacted] 25X1
- [redacted] the Soviet population, the Great Russians in particular, were chauvinistic to an almost fanatical degree. Secondly, [redacted] the average Soviet citizen greatly fears and is strongly opposed to the outbreak of a new world war. There was absolutely no doubt about this point. On the basis of these two facts, [redacted] there would be a good chance of a revolution within the Soviet Union if war came about as a result of Soviet aggression. However, if the Soviet Union was attacked or appeared to have been attacked, then the strong patriotic sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the population would be aroused and they would stand firm against their enemy. 25X1
39. An amusing incident occurred on Gorodomlya Island which is related to Soviet charges that the United States is conducting bacteriological warfare in Korea. A German specialist by the name of Dr. OFFENBACH raised rabbits for home consumption. He slaughtered several for dinner and hung the skins outside on a clothesline to dry. During the night the pelts were attacked by a swarm of moths and they fell to the ground minus much of their hair. The next morning, the wife of chief engineer VASILYEV (she was a doctor at the polyclinic) chanced upon the skins and in a state of great excitement said they must be examined immediately. She said that they could have been thrown out by an American aircraft during the night and could be polluted with germs. She felt that this was possible because she had read so much in the paper about bacteriological warfare. After the situation was explained to her, the vigilant doctor calmed down. However, the anecdote does illustrate the point that even educated Soviets were impressed by the most ridiculous propaganda. 25X1

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